

Serial No. 10/686,302

Atty. Docket No. 0194-2001US02

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

Claims 1-19 (cancelled).

Claim 20. (new) A surgical scalpel comprising:
a housing having an internal channel and a viewing window formed therein; and

a blade carrier slidably disposed in said channel for movement between a retracted position and an extended position, said blade carrier including a single use indicator that is visible through said viewing window when said blade carrier is in said retracted position and is structurally altered when said blade carrier is moved to said extended position.

Claim 21. (new) The surgical scalpel of claim 20 wherein said single use indicator is a flexible convex element that is irreversibly collapsed when said blade carrier is moved to said extended position.

Claim 22. (new) The surgical scalpel of claim 20 wherein a portion of said blade carrier is tapered to form a shimming plane that contacts an interior wall surface of said internal channel when said blade carrier is in said extended position.

Claim 23. (new) The surgical scalpel of claim 22 further comprising one or more tapered ribs formed on said interior wall surface.

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Claim 24. (new) The surgical scalpel of claim 20 wherein said housing includes a slot formed therein and said blade carrier includes an actuator/locking fin that extends through said slot.

Claim 25. (new) The surgical scalpel of claim 24 wherein said slot includes a ramp formed therein for engaging said actuator/locking fin when said blade carrier is in said extended position.

Claim 26. (new) The surgical scalpel of claim 20 wherein said blade carrier includes a leaf spring extending outwardly therefrom, said leaf spring having a distal end that engages said housing.

Claim 27. (new) The surgical scalpel of claim 20 further comprising a palm support removably attached to said housing.

Claim 28. (new) The surgical scalpel of claim 20 further comprising a plurality of raised ribs formed on an exterior surface of said housing.

Claim 29. (new) The surgical scalpel of claim 20 wherein said housing is a molded plastic housing of unitary construct.

Claim 30. (new) A surgical scalpel comprising:
a housing having an internal channel and a viewing window formed therein;

a blade carrier slidably disposed in said channel for movement between a retracted position and an extended position, said blade carrier having a first end adapted to engage a surgical blade and a leaf spring extending from a

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second end thereof, said leaf spring having a distal end that engages said housing, said blade carrier further including a single use indicator that is visible through said viewing window when said blade carrier is in said retracted position and is structurally altered when said blade carrier is moved to said extended position; and

a surgical blade attached to said first end of said blade carrier.

Claim 31. (new) The surgical scalpel of claim 30 wherein said single use indicator is a flexible convex element that is irreversibly collapsed when said blade carrier is moved to said extended position.

Claim 32. (new) The surgical scalpel of claim 30 wherein a portion of said blade carrier is tapered to form a shimming plane that contacts an interior wall surface of said internal channel when said blade carrier is in said extended position.

Claim 33. (new) The surgical scalpel of claim 32 further comprising one or more tapered ribs formed on said interior wall surface.

Claim 34. (new) The surgical scalpel of claim 30 wherein said housing includes a slot formed therein and said blade carrier includes an actuator/locking fin that extends through said slot.

Claim 35. (new) The surgical scalpel of claim 34 wherein said slot includes a ramp formed therein for engaging said actuator/locking fin when said blade carrier is in said extended position.

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Claim 36. (new) The surgical scalpel of claim 30 further comprising a palm support removably attached to said housing.

Claim 37. (new) The surgical scalpel of claim 30 further comprising a plurality of raised ribs formed on an exterior surface of said housing.

Claim 38. (new) The surgical scalpel of claim 30 wherein said housing is a molded plastic housing of unitary construct.